



EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

August 2010

Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) Training of Senior Trainers of ALPT

Completed: USAID's BESST project is working with the Ministry of Education's Teacher Education Department to plan and establish a program for primary education teachers to study and complete the equivalent of secondary education while they continue teaching. To prepare for the Accelerated Learning Program for Teachers' (ALPT's) roll-out in eleven provinces of Afghanistan, BESST held workshops to train 55 senior trainers from July 27 to August 5. The workshop used practical, hands-on lessons to prepare the senior trainers to train ALPT facilitators. During the last week of training, thirteen teachers without a secondary school education attended the training to help the senior trainers test the study guides and facilitation techniques by participating in mock ALPT study groups.



Primary education teachers study and complete their secondary school equivalent while they continue teaching.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

The senior trainers then returned to their respective provinces and prepared to train the ALPT facilitators. Once the facilitators are prepared, they will begin tutoring ALPT participants and conducting the ALPT study groups in most districts in the eleven provinces supported by BESST. Approximately 11,000 teachers have registered and are ready to participate in ALPT.

Beginning in September 2010, ALPT will provide teachers with tutoring, small group study, and subject-area study guides for self-directed study. Teachers will be continually assessed by taking standardized exams developed by the Ministry of Education for each subject and each grade level. Passing these exams will certify each participant as having satisfied the academic requirements for entry into Teacher Training Colleges.



Curriculum Consensus Workshop participants.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

Consensus Reached to Improve the Masters in Public Health Curriculum: A USAID-supported one-day "Curriculum Consensus Workshop" challenged participants to define the attributes and processes that will culminate with an internationally respected curriculum for an Afghan Masters in Public Health (MPH) degree. The workshop involved representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, USAID, Kabul Medical University (KMU), lecturers in public health, Jhpiego, WHO, and international experts in curriculum development and public health. The facilitated discussions were at times lively as one

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Afghan senior lecturer, striving to be heard over other voices, shouted, “This curriculum,” while waving the book that defines medical education curriculum in Afghanistan, “should be tossed in the trash! We are here to discuss how we can better prepare teaching for our students so that they really learn something!”

The workshop, held on July 26 at KMU, included presentations and participative group work facilitated by the Higher Education Project (HEP) medical education staff. Curricular reform in medical education, clinical skills training, and public health can prepare Afghan doctors to better attend to the country’s urgent health needs. Health statistics have improved since 2001 thanks in great part to the significant investment of many millions of dollars by the American people, through USAID and other donors.

At the end of the workshop, participants were in agreement regarding the look and feel of a curriculum, and the processes involved in developing the courses and content. As Dr. Yosoufpur, a KMU senior professor stated, “I hope that we will be able to implement the solid thinking that we discussed.” All of the participants agreed that development of a robust MPH curriculum will take a long time and that now the hard work will begin.

Community Leaders Discuss Livelihood

Opportunities: From August 3-4, USAID’s Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP-2) organized a two-day stocktaking workshop in Kabul. Sixty-five community leaders and village facilitators from ten provinces, including 20 women, participated in the workshop. LCEP-2 addresses the issue of illiteracy and a lack of employment skills by promoting a sustainable process of lifelong learning and community economic empowerment.

During the workshop, the participants shared their views, experiences, and best practices on how vocational, literacy, and business development education are conducted in each of the areas. In addition to developing solutions to address common challenges, the participants also discussed specific problems in insecure areas where targeted approaches have been taken. The activities that mostly interested the participants were the productive skills training programs and community banks because of their direct positive impact on the lives of the community members. The views and best practices identified during the workshop were very useful to the community leaders and village facilitators to further improve program implementation in each of their areas.

“We notice that every province had its own challenges exclusively and fortunately we could find the solution for each. It was one of the huge advantages of this workshop,” said Mrs. Golsoom, a village facilitator from Hirat Province. She said that after the workshop was over, the participants could holistically understand the status of the program in other provinces, the opportunities and challenges, and potential best approaches.



Community leaders and village facilitators share experiences on literacy and vocational education activities during the workshop.

PHOTO: USAID/LCEP-2

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Science and math educators vote for their association's president.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

Science and Math Association Enthusiastically Welcomed:

Approximately 300 science and math educators from regions around Afghanistan came together in August for a conference on "Professionalizing Natural Math and Science Teaching in Afghanistan." The conference aimed to connect people and establish the Natural Science and Math Educators Association of Afghanistan (NSMEAA) association.

With little equipment or up to date research on teaching, science and math educators struggled during years of conflict to find interesting ways to

teach their students. Students spent most of their time memorizing notes and experiments without ever seeing a practical demonstration or having a chance to do their own hands on research.

USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP) has been working with science and math teachers for the past two years. As the culmination of HEP's work, the conference aimed to create a sustainable system for Afghans to continue the development of their training and research methods.

A participant at the conference from Paktya said, "We have done many things to make teaching science and math more interactive and practical for the students and for the teachers. This conference is very good because it brings everyone together and we see that all over the country we have the same issues." Deputy Minister of Higher Education Professor Osman Barbury spoke of the importance of the association at the opening ceremony saying, "Such associations are important for the development of math and science education, and the development of Afghanistan."

Afghanistan National Engineering Policy

Workshop: From August 2-4, more than 100 engineers, faculty members, and policy makers from Afghan and international government institutions, universities, and non-governmental organizations attended a three-day Afghanistan National Engineering Policy Workshop at Kabul University.

The workshop provided a rare opportunity for Afghan and international partners to discuss strategic planning and the status of engineering education in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Higher Education reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to improving the quality of education. Representatives from eight Afghan universities discussed their engineering programs in detail highlighting the need to sustain recent achievements in facilities expansion, faculty development, engineering curricula, and student enrollment. Implementing partners from U.S. and international higher education



Afghan faculty members and policy makers discuss a variety of topics including curriculum development and creating standards for engineering programs in Afghanistan.

PHOTO: USAID/AeQA

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institutions described their experience working with study abroad and technical assistance programs in Afghanistan.

Workshop participants developed recommendations for selected issues in engineering education including creating a conducive work environment for university professors; developing partnerships between universities and the private sector; establishing guidelines, standards, and an approval process for specialized engineering curricula; establishing an Afghan national accreditation board for engineering programs; and developing a standardized, national core curriculum in engineering. At the end of the workshop, participants developed a list of action items and agreed to form an advisory committee to coordinate national engineering education policy with the Ministry of Higher Education. The increased coordination and planning will help improve the quality of engineering education at public universities throughout Afghanistan.

Afghan University Faculty Members Plan for the Future: Participants from universities across Afghanistan were proud to present their institutional plans to their colleagues at a conference in Kabul from August 3 to 5. The conference was the culmination of more than four years of hard work by faculty members to improve the learning environment for themselves and their students, supported by USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP).



Participants share their institutional plans with colleagues.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

Afghan universities were shattered by decades of conflict and often were empty shells with no equipment, books, or electricity. Students took exams outside and families were afraid to send girls to study because of lack of security. The remaining faculty members were struggling and did not know how to build the capacity of the institutes they had kept going throughout the Taliban years.

USAID introduced institutional development teams (IDTs) at the universities, which helped faculty members to determine their own futures by learning how to request funding and make plans for changes in the university environment. The changes have included buildings, professional development, the establishment of kindergartens, and sports facilities for students.

The conference in Kabul was the occasion for more than one hundred members of IDTs across the country to present their plans to their colleagues, share successes, and get mutual support. They discussed how to present their development needs, build solid teams, and keep the progress going. A participant said "this conference is very important because it allowed us to meet colleagues from all over the country, some for the first time, we were able to share ideas, problems and solutions."

The American University of Afghanistan Opens New Building, Welcomes New Faculty: The American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) is Afghanistan's only private, independent, coeducational institution of higher learning. Supported by USAID and private

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donations, AUAF provides an American-style, high-quality academic program to students from throughout Afghanistan.

In spring 2010, AUAF had its largest enrollment since its inception with 531 students. AUAF expects those numbers to increase for the fall term and to increase again in the spring of 2011, reaching 800 by the end of the academic year. Student registration is underway and classes began August 22.

A record 21 new faculty members have arrived for the start of the new school year, bringing the total full-time faculty to 49 and maintaining a student/faculty ratio of less than 16 to 1, with small classes and individual attention to students. AUAF President Dr. C. Michael Smith and Dr. Sharif Fayez, former Minister of Higher Education and a founder of the university, welcomed the new staff. One new faculty member commented that the process of receiving and orienting new faculty was the best he had seen in ten years of experience working overseas.

To accommodate the new staff members and students, AUAF has opened a new building with 24 faculty offices. Construction began on June 15 and was completed in record time. The university took possession of the building on August 15 and faculty moved in the next day. The current campus now has seven main buildings, in addition to its maintenance shops and transportation offices. The new faculty members and new facilities support a full range of academic degree programs in business, computer science, and the liberal arts.

Interactive Lessons for Medical Students: Medical students in Afghanistan can look forward to a more interactive and up to date curriculum thanks to a workshop run from August 1-5 by USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP). The ten participants from medical and nursing faculties traveled from Kabul, Khost, Kandahar, Kapisa, and Jalalabad to join colleagues in Hirat for the Training of Professional Instructors of Public Health. In addition, three staff members from the Hirat Provincial Health Directorate were invited to attend the workshop.

Years of conflict and economic devastation in Afghanistan have meant medical students do not have the facilities needed to train properly in modern techniques of medicine and patient care. Universities do not have a standard curriculum, and methods of teaching and learning and materials are often decades old.

The workshop focused on steps of developing a curriculum, content selection, teaching methodology, and assessment and evaluation procedures to document students' learning. Faculty members were prepared to incorporate materials they have discussed in previous HEP intensive public health courses. Participants were very enthusiastic about adapting new teaching methods to the Afghan context and were particularly keen on interactive lecture techniques, which will include students involvement in the learning process in classes which are still very large.



Medical students and professors discuss needed improvements to the medical school curriculum.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

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Techniques were discussed and put into practice very quickly and the participants were excited about introducing them into classes. Dr. Shafiq Ahmed Joya from the faculty of medicine in Hirat said, "During this course I learned how to make my lessons more interactive. I also learned how to develop a case study to be used in the classroom." Students in Afghanistan will definitely welcome the change.